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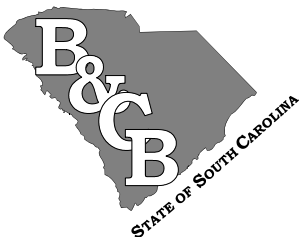
HANDWASHING

Most experts agree that the single most effective practice that prevents the spread of germs is good handwashing. You can stop the spread of germs by washing your hands and teaching children about good handwashing practices. As summer ends and we enter the flu and cold season it is very important that people develop good handwashing practices to decrease the likelihood of becoming sick. It is especially important to wash your hands after restroom visits, wiping your nose and handling contaminated items.

How to Wash Hands

- Always use warm, running water and a mild, preferably liquid, soap. Antibacterial soaps may be used, but are not required. Premoistened cleansing towelettes do not effectively clean hands and do not take the place of handwashing.

- Wet the hands and apply a small amount (dime to quarter size) of liquid soap to hands. Rub hands together vigorously until a soapy lather appears and continue for at least 15 seconds. Be sure to scrub between fingers, under fingernails and around the tops and palms of the hands.

- Rinse hands under warm running water. Leave the water running while drying hands. Dry hands with a clean, disposable (or single use) towel, being careful to avoid touching the faucet handles or towel holder with clean hands.

- Turn the faucet off using the towel as a barrier between your hands and the faucet handle. Discard the used towel in a trash can lined with a fluid-resistant (plastic) bag. Trashcans with foot-pedal operated lids are preferable.

- Consider using hand lotion to prevent chapping of hands. If using lotions, use liquids or tubes that squirts so that the hands do not have direct contact with container spout. Direct contact with the spout could contaminate the lotion inside the container.

- When assisting a child in handwashing, either hold the child (if an infant) or have the child stand on a safety step at a height at which the child's hands can hang freely under the running water. Assist the child in performing all of the above steps and then wash your own hands.